

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested. By the present amendment, claim 1 is amended, claim 5 is canceled, and claim 8 is added.

Claim 1 is amended to recite that a connecting ring (18) defines a cut-out (20) in an interior portion of said connecting ring, said connecting ring (18) having a peripheral portion from which said limiting straps (16) originate, said connecting ring (18) being formed together with said limiting straps (16) as a single piece of fabric. Claim 1 is further amended to recite that the connecting ring (18) and the reinforcement layer (22) are sewn to said upper portion (14) by the at least one first seam (24). Neither Hidehito et al., nor Hiroshi, nor Mauer et al. disclose or suggest all of these added features in claim 1.

By contrast, Hidehito et al. discloses a gas bag with tethers 18b and a gas leak preventive patch 44, where the tethers and the patch are sewn to the upper portion of the gas bag wall by a first seam 26 and the patch is sewn to the gas bag wall by a radially outer second seam 46. However, Hidehito et al. fails to show that the tethers originate from a peripheral portion of a connecting ring and that the connecting ring defines a cut-out in its interior. Hidehito only states that the base of the tether formation cloth 18b is circular (see paragraph [022] of the attached machine translation of the Hidehito reference).

The connecting ring with the cut-out of the present invention enhances the flexibility of the upper portion of the gas bag as compared with a circular piece of fabric. Also, since the limiting straps originate from the peripheral portion of the connecting ring, the forces acting on the upper portion of the gas bag wall are more evenly distributed than that of a circular piece of fabric.

Hiroshi discloses a gas bag with a tether belt 58 and a patch 54, where the tether belt is sewn to the upper portion of the gas bag wall by first seams 60 and the patch is sewn to the upper gas bag wall by radially outer second seams 56. However, Hiroshi fails to show a connecting ring defining a cut-out in its interior and that the connecting ring has a peripheral portion of which the limiting traps originate.

Hiroshi further does not show that the connecting ring is formed together with the limiting straps (16) as a single piece of fabric. By contrast, as shown in drawing 5 of the attached machine translation of the Hiroshi reference, the tether belt 58 consists of several tethers 58 connected by a strip 70.

Maurer discloses a gas bag with tethers 210-240 and an outer periphery 252. The tethers are sewn only to the outer periphery 252, while the outer periphery is only sewn to the outer face of the gas bag by a radial outer seam 256. Mauer fails to disclose a connecting ring that is formed together with the limiting straps as a single piece of fabric. Mauer further fails to disclose a connecting ring in which the limiting straps originate and also that the connecting ring

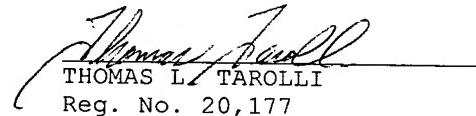
and the reinforcement layer are sewn to the upper portion of the gas bag by the at least one first seam. By contrast, the stretchable member 214 of Mauer is a separate piece from the tethers and is located in the middle of the gas bag well away from the upper portion of the gas bag.

Therefore, in view of the above-mentioned reasons, claim 1 is allowable. Claims 2-4, and 6-8 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable as depending from an allowable claim and for the specific features recited therein.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, and allowance of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,



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